

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE IV-1

LOS ANGELES TIMES
29 MAY 1983

U.S. Spies: 'The Wraps Are Off'

By David Wise

WASHINGTON—A Mujahedeen insurgent in a remote mountain pass in Afghanistan receives a Soviet-made Kalashnikov rifle from captured American stocks. Halfway across the world, near Jalapa, Nicaragua, a former member of dictator Anastasio Somoza's national guard, now a member of the anti-Sandinista FDN, is issued an American-made grenade-launcher. In El Salvador, an election official stamps a woman's wrist with invisible ink to prevent her from voting more than once.

What all three have in common—the Afghan tribesman, the *Somocista* and the Salvadoran official—is that they received their weapons, and the invisible ink, from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. From all signs, under the Reagan Administration, the CIA has stepped up its covert operations around the globe, probably in number and certainly in size.

Even in Washington, the names of John H. Stein and Duane R. (Dewey) Clarridge are not household words, but both men have an important, albeit secret, impact on U.S. foreign policy. Stein heads the CIA directorate of operations, the intelligence agency's covert-action arm, and Clarridge is the CIA's top operative for Latin America. Under CIA director William J. Casey, who was Reagan's campaign manager in 1980, they help to direct America's secret wars, including the conflict in Nicaragua, the agency's most ambitious undertaking since the Bay of Pigs.

Congress has become increasingly restive about the covert operation in Nicaragua—an operation that is no longer very covert—but the increase in cloak-and-dagger activity should come as no surprise to the lawmakers, the press or the public. During the 1980 election campaign, Reagan promised to rebuild America's intelligence agencies, which he and his aides believed had been unnecessarily hobbled following the disclosures in the 1970s of widespread abuses by the spy agencies. The Republican Party platform specifically pledged to "improve U.S. intelligence capabilities for . . . covert action."

But the many millions of dollars of covert money being spent in Central America, and the increased emphasis on covert action in general, is only one part of a much larger picture. In general, the

Administration has moved on a broad front to unleash the intelligence agencies, particularly the CIA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to control sensitive information, and to crack down on government employees who leak to the press.

The President has done so through a series of executive orders and directives, as well as through the budget and legislation. Since taking office, he has issued a new executive order on intelligence, another on classification of documents and a recent directive to deal with news leaks. At the urging of the Administration, Congress has passed a law to bar the publication of the names of secret agents, and the FBI has issued a new set of guidelines that ease the restrictions placed on the bureau during the Ford Administration.

All of these actions have clearly been designed to mold the intelligence agencies to the Reagan design. "Each Administration in the last three has written a new executive order on intelligence," Michael J. O'Neil, chief counsel to the House Intelligence Committee, points out. "Intelligence has become a political issue. It wasn't before. The Church committee

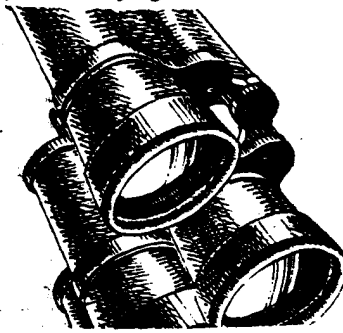
*The Administration
Has Strengthened the
CIA and FBI
and Tightened
Government Secrecy*

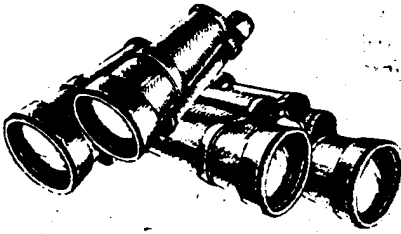
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changed all that." (The Senate Intelligence Committee headed by former Democratic Sen. Frank Church of Idaho conducted the most far-reaching of the various investigations of the intelligence agencies carried out in the mid-1970s.)

During the 1980 campaign, O'Neil continued, both Reagan and Casey said they didn't have the capacity to conduct covert operations. "Clearly they set out to rebuild it," he said. "They wanted to be sure we have this form of policy tool when the





Certainly the Reagan order on intelligence permits more intrusive activity against Americans than its predecessor. It broadens the CIA's power in two ways: For the first time in history, through a subtle change in language, it permits CIA covert operations inside the United States. The Carter order said such secret operations must be "conducted abroad." The Reagan order says that "special activities"—the euphemism for covert operations—must be "conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives abroad." In addition the Reagan order allows the CIA to collect foreign intelligence from unsuspecting Americans.

The order also permits a wide range of surveillance of citizens. It permits infiltration of lawful political groups, and the opening of mail and break-ins without a court warrant, if approved by the attorney general.

Similarly, the Reagan order on classification makes it easier for the government to keep documents secret indefinitely. It removes the requirement that officials consider the public's right to know before-classifying information, eliminates the need for basing classifications on "identifi-

able" damage to the national security and requires officials when in doubt, to use the highest, rather than the lowest, possible classification.

In March of this year Reagan followed up these orders with a directive requiring lie-detector tests for government employees suspected of leaking classified information to the press. The same directive may require thousands of former officials to clear books and articles with the government to avoid disclosure of classified information.

Last year, Congress passed the "identities" bill providing stiff jail terms and fines for government officials and, in some cases, journalists who disclose the identities of secret agents. The bill is sweeping in its terms. It protects the identities of CIA, FBI, military and other intelligence agents who either serve abroad or have served abroad within the past five years. But it would also prohibit the disclosure of the identities of ordinary citizens who are informants for intelligence agencies and even foreigners who are current or former agents.

The new FBI guidelines, issued recently by Atty. Gen. William French Smith, would permit the FBI to investigate persons who advocate criminal acts, even under circumstances in which they could not be prosecuted. Under Supreme Court decisions, there must be a direct and immediate link between speech and the danger of violent action for advocacy to be a crime.

The guidelines applied to domestic intelligence investigations. Another set of secret guidelines governs the FBI's investigation of spies and terrorists. According to one source who watches the bureau closely, the FBI is much more interested today in potential terrorist groups than in domestic political activity. "The Church committee documented a massive flow of information to the FBI from local 'red squads'—police intelligence units in cities like Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. The flow the other way, from the FBI to the local police, was much less." With the FBI putting more money and personnel into catching spies and terrorists, the cooperation by the FBI with local police on domestic political intelligence has presumably diminished, the official said.

But it is in the area of CIA covert operations that the Administration appears on a collision course with Congress. The House Intelligence Committee has voted to cut off all covert aid to Nicaragua and the Senate Intelligence Committee has given the Administration until Sept. 30 to redefine its goals in Central America. In so doing the panel has for the first time demanded that it have advance approval of covert operations.

Jay Peterzell, who has closely studied covert operations for the Washington-based Center for National Security Studies, said that the increase in the number of such operations over the Carter years can't be documented because the totals are secret, but he added, "The size of the CIA budget for covert operations has gone up, and in the 1984 proposed budget it went up dramatically. A lot of the increase went for replenishing weapons stocks." If so, it would appear that the CIA's hand will continue to be felt around the globe, as part of the Administration's increased reliance on the intelligence agencies, America's invisible government.

David Wise writes frequently about intelligence agencies and secrecy. His new novel of espionage, "The Children's Game," will be published in October.